DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 271 180 JC 860 395

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TITLE Project Bank: Word Processing on Campus.
INSTITUTION Triton Coll., River Grove, Ill.
PUB DATE [86]
NOTE 8p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Colleges; *Computer Literacy; *Computer Science Education; Minicourses; Program Descriptions; Two Year Colleges; *Word Processing

ABSTRACT

Project Bank was initiated at Triton College (Illinois) to increase student awareness of the merits of word processing as it affects their class work and related assignments; to make faculty aware of advances in word processing programs; and to increase the utilization of the college's computer laboratory. All fall 1985 incoming freshmen were contacted by mail and invited to participate in Project Bank as part of a group class or as an independent learner. Enrolled students paid a $10 registration fee and received instruction via the Bank Street Word Processing Tutor program and three specially designed exercises; a Project Bank T-shirt; a double density floppy disc; and a protective transporter case. Due to the limited number of students who enrolled in the program, initial months were devoted to developing enrollment procedures and instructing computer laboratory assistants in the use of the tutor program. Through the dissemination of articles on the effects of the use of word processing in the classroom and the use of word processors by students in completing assignments, faculty at Triton became increasingly aware of the benefits of word processing. Several faculty members enrolled their entire classes in Project Bank. By mid-November, 250 students had participated in the project, and a recommendation was made for the continuation of Project Bank into the spring semester. Perhaps the single most important outcome of the project was a growing awareness that Project Bank was affecting writing across the curriculum. (EJV)

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Project Bank: Word Processing On Campus

by Robert F. Hlavin, Triton College, English Department

Triton College is somewhat unique among community colleges. The Triton College Board of Education sets aside a respectable sum of money annually for faculty Research and Development. In this instance, as an applicant before a faculty/administration designed committee, I received funding for my proposal, PROJECT BANK.

Briefly, what I proposed to do was instruct as many incoming freshmen students enrolled in the Fall, 1985, semester in the operation of either an Apple or an IBM PC, personal computer using the Bank Street word processing program.

Essentially, I would have to identify and contact incoming freshmen. I would have to design an attractive "package" promoting the merits of Project Bank. Naturally, I would have to design the total unit of instruction. And, of course, because there were monies involved, secure an account number and channel funds. Needless to say, there had to be complete cooperation between PROJECT BANK and the computer station in the Triton College, Learning Resource Center, Independent Learning Center.

First off, we expected to enroll approximately 1,000 freshmen in the Fall semester, 1985. Because of the July 1 project approval date, it was felt impractical to try and reach incoming students through the on-going orientation session conducted by the Admissions Department. Rather, initial contact was made through a letter from PROJECT BANK.

Students were given an option. They could enroll in a group class or enter the project as an independent learner.

Concurrent with the development of this letter, a PROJECT BANK logo

was designed in the Triton College Graphic Arts Department. This logo would appear imprinted on a white T-shirt in red over the left pocket area. It showed a computer/monitor with the words Triton College above and PROJECT BANK below. This T-shirt and logo would give the project needed identity.

Enrolled students would pay a $10 registration fee. For their $10. they would receive, in addition to instruction, the PROJECT BANK T-shirt, a double density 5 1/4" floppy disc, and a protective transporter case.

Instruction would include: the Bank Street Word Processing Tutor Program and three especially designed exercises by the author. The tutor segment would take students approximately one hour to an hour and fifteen minutes. The exercises would take an additional hour and a half. Initialization of student disks enabling them to save materials accounted for no more than five minutes.

Frankly, our initial invitation by letter proved to be ineffective. However, with the limited number of students enrolled in the month of August we were able to use the time to develop our enrollment procedures and instruct computer laboratory student assistants in the tutor program itself and then in the project designer's special exercises.

As has happened often times in the course of history, technologies come together in their development to set the stage for still another form of improvement. Such was the case with the development of the Scholastic Bank Street Writer designed for the IBM PC.

As most educators familiar with computer software know, it was the Apple version Bank Street which brought word processing into the classroom or computer laboratory. However, staff members who invested

in personal computers for themselves sought out more sophisticated word processing programs. (In this instance, the author who was trained in the Triton College secretarial word processing program on a Wang saw the original Apple and Bank Street program as cumbersome to say the least). However, in Spring, 1985, our staff computer liaison member called to our attention, the improved Bank Street program designed for the IBM. Now, then, the power and speed of the IBM could be wed to the enhanced especially user-friendly Bank Street program.

In its newly designed computer laboratory, Triton College installed twenty IBM PC's designed for word processing use with still others for graphics and music. Apples were situated nearby but in terms of this project almost completely unused. Thus, the machines and a simple program technology were joined in this effort to instruct students in this form of word processing.

Many journal articles have been published in the past year as to the merit of the word processor in the English classroom and in particular in composition writing. Authors reported on student eagerness to improve their writing. Editing of compositions, a task abhorred in the past, now became a moment of exhilaration. Finally, teachers cited case after case of increased student pride and accomplishment in the final product.

The contents of these articles were made known to the Triton College R & D Committee. Indeed, student produced word processing papers were beginning to appear on teacher desks. Triton English department members were developing programs for the Apple in English usage. A limited number of students had access to an Apple micro-computer laboratory working on the original flawed Bank Street program with its tedious method of introducing capitalization and various menu

operations.

Thus, when the Fall Semester began, faculty were not totally unaware of the benefits of word processing. Several faculty enrolled their classes in Project Bank en masse. These classes represented writing development, rhetoric and composition, and communications curriculum.

The newly designed IBM Bank Street tutor is not perfect by any means. For our purposes, we would have preferred the tutor to be on a separate disk rather than on the obverse side of the program. To secure the program, the operator had to call up the Bank Street and as the logo sped across the screen strike the "t" key. For the novice, witnessing for the first time the spectacular effect of an attractive logo moving across the screen and striking the appropriate key simultaneously often proved too much. Hence, time was lost going through the start up process a second time. Also, the tutor itself, although containing appropriate instructional information, proved tedious or redundant in the initial steps. (The designer attempted to incorporate most of his material used in the Apple Bank Street tutor program). Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of the tutor occurs when the student user accidently "requests" returning to lesson one while intending to work on lesson five, six or seven. At present, it appears the only way to get beyond lesson one is to work through lesson one and then exit to the "Lesson" menu.

However, the fact that the IBM Bank Street did away with the "Transfer" menu and made formatting unusually simple more than made up for the tutor's inadequacies.

By mid-November, 250 students had participated in Project Bank.

With its expiration as a project, a recommendation was made that Triton College continue into the Spring semester Project Bank in one form or another.

After much discussion among three major divisions of the college - the College of Arts and Sciences, Continuing Education and the Learning Resources Center - PROJECT BANK will continue as a Continuing Education with a Coordinator of Project Bank. Students will enroll as they do for any other course. A $10 course fee will be charged. Upon presentation of their paid fee slip to the Independent Learning Center computer laboratory staff, the student will receive his personal double density disk. T-shirts with logo have given way to a PROJECT BANK logo on a display type button. After moving through the Bank Street tutor program on the IBM and the special exercises, the student will receive a Certificate of Completion.

English faculty have indicated a willingness to promote Project Bank among their students. Twenty sections or more may enroll in the Spring semester. At the Project Bank coordinator's suggestion, all themes and term papers assigned must be prepared on the word processor. All creative writing materials should also be prepared on the word processor. It has been suggested that all revisions receive one third of a grade increase. Thus, a grade received of B- be awarded A- upon editing and resubmission.

It should be noted that the newly revised Modern Language Association research paper style sheet lends itself to preparation on the computer. When English Department staff members became aware of this fact, they recognized inherent educational implications. Now, research papers could be revised and revised with ease until the student understood the concepts and requirements of the assignment.

This paper will not elaborate on those students' attitudes towards word processing and its effect on their work. Similar remarks can be found in current educational literature.

The purpose of PROJECT BANK, then, was to increase student awareness of the merits of word processing as it may affect their classwork and related assignments, to make faculty aware of advances in the word processing programs which make use of state of the art technologies, and to increase the utilization of the computer laboratory and its equipment.

In all of these goals, PROJECT BANK succeeded. Perhaps, the single most important outcome was a growing awareness that PROJECT BANK was affecting writing across the curriculum. Reports were made to the project director that many students in the career programs were now submitting work prepared on word processors. Additionally, several students reported purchasing personal computers. It seems their parents were greatly impressed with the improved quality of their word processing prepared class work.

The Coordinator of Project Bank, Spring semester, and the administration will evaluate the status of Project Bank, Summer, 1986. Hopefully, in Fall, 1986, there will be one designated English classroom containing 30 IBM PC's. If this is the case, Project Bank may expire at Triton College, serving the same role as the Pony Express before the final laying of railroad track in the American West.

In conclusion, PROJECT BANK served a need at a time when computer technology made its presence known on the Triton College campus. For many students, they are prepared to meet at least this aspect of the technological present and future with a high degree of confidence. Indeed, from those associated with PROJECT BANK we know they will meet that future with zest.

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